EPP Update
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ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING

EPEAT Strives to Simplify Green Purchasing of Computers

These days, when an organization needs to purchase electronic products, it will likely seek out "greener" versions of the items, such as those that have been refurbished or use less energy. To help support this growing trend, the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) is being developed through an EPA cooperative agreement with Zero Waste Alliance. EPEAT is designed to evaluate the environmental performance of computer desktops, laptops, and monitors throughout their life cycle, and includes both a set of criteria for assessing products and a management system for their application and maintenance. Currently, the EPEAT program is working to identify a host organization to manage and operate the tool; conducting a public review of the final draft of the environmental performance criteria; and developing a database that vendors can use to submit self declarations and purchasers can use to view lists of EPEAT qualified products.

EPEAT Standard

The EPEAT standard is a rating system that includes performance criteria in eight categories: 1) reduction/elimination of environmentally sensitive materials; 2) materials selection (including recycled and biobased content); 3) design for end-of-life; 4) life-cycle extension; 5) energy conservation (including ENERGY STAR® requirements); 6) end-of-life management; 7) corporate performance; and 8) packaging. Federal purchasers using this standard will be guaranteed to meet their green purchasing requirements for these product categories. The standard is currently in draft form and is slated to be finalized by spring 2006. Federal

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Highlights

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) seeks the overall best value, taking into account price competitiveness, regulatory requirements, performance standards, and environmental impact. Because purchasers typically have clear sources of information on procurement and safety regulations and well-established methods for evaluating price and performance, the U.S. EPA EPP program has developed the *EPP Update* to help government purchasers consider the environmental factors in the EPP equation and to keep purchasers informed of EPP news. For more information about the EPP program's history, tools, and resources, please visit <www.epa.gov/epp>.

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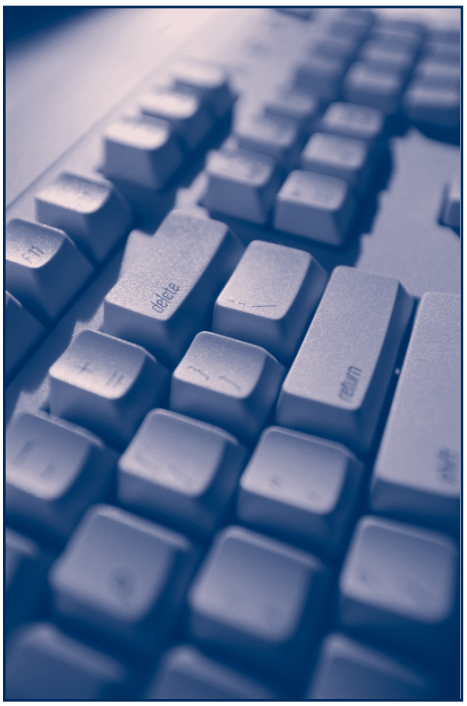
agencies that signed the Federal Electronics Challenge MOU were invited to vote on the current standard.

Database

Recently, EPA conducted a beta test of the EPEAT database—a Web-based interface for product information in which manufacturers had the ability to test the system by entering "dummy data" on fictitious products. Purchasers then had a week to surf the database and review the site's available data. After this test period, both manufacturers and purchasers provided comments on the usability of the system. The database will be revised based on these comments and then passed on to the new EPEAT host organization.



Federal IT Specifications

To date, the following agencies have added EPEAT into their RFPs or contracts: the U.S. Army, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, and EPA.

For more information on EPEAT, please visit <www.epeat.net> or contact Holly Elwood at <elwood.holly@epa.gov>.

Expanding the Biobased Product Shopping List

Six items made from biobased products will soon be given preference for federal purchases as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) implementation of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, better known as the Farm Bill.

USDA is proposing an amendment to the January 2005 "Guidelines for Designating Biobased Products for Federal Procurement," which established a preference program for procuring biobased products. A biobased product is any commercial or industrial product (other than food or feed) that is composed, in whole or in significant part, of biological products, renewable domestic agricultural materials (including plant, animal, and marine materials), or forestry materials. The amendment will designate six items for federal procurement preference, including:

- Mobile equipment hydraulic fluids
- Urethane roof coatings
- Water tank coatings
- Diesel fuel additives
- Penetrating lubricants
- Bedding, bed linens, and towels

The amendment will also define the minimum biobased content for each item and provide information on life-cycle costs and environmental impacts for each item, estimated with the Building for Environmental and Economic Sustainability (BEES) life cycle analysis tool developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Based on the 2005 guidelines, federal agencies must give preference to purchasing goods with biobased content when practical, based on price, availability, and performance. Federal agencies have one year from the publication of the rule to ensure that their procurement specifications require a preference for the biobased products.

The biobased products procurement program was originally authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, which provided for significant changes to the types of products purchased by the federal government, and subsequently will make it easier for federal customers to purchase biobased products. This program is similar to EPA's Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG), which address the acquisition of products containing recycled materials. Ultimately, the biobased products program will promote energy independence by substituting biobased products for fossil energy-based products, as well as create demand for new business and job growth in rural America.

In the future, USDA will continue to expand the list of products eligible for its biobased products program, allowing manufacturers of those products to claim preferred procurement status when marketing their products to the federal government. USDA will also be issuing a proposed rule to establish a voluntary biobased products labeling and certification program, which will allow authorized producers to use a "USDA Certified Biobased Product" label.

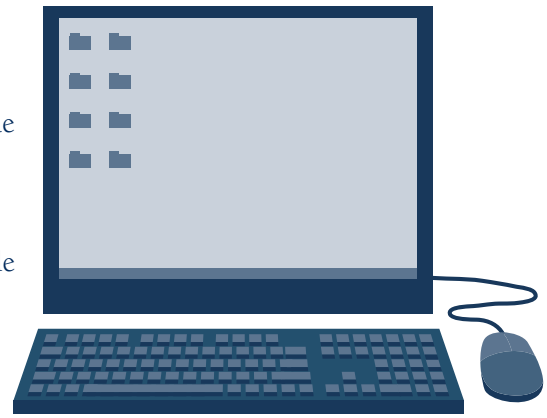
For more information, visit <www.biobased.oce.usda.gov> or contact Jim Darr at <darr.james@epa.gov> or (202) 564-8841.

Point, Click, READ, Recycle

A new program is helping EPA and other federal agencies better manage their electronic equipment. The Recycling Electronics and Asset Disposition (READ) services program is a procurement tool to assist agencies in properly managing electronic inventories and in recycling and disposing of excess or obsolete electronics using an environmentally responsible approach.

Computers and other office electronics are essential to most jobs, but many federal employees don't realize how many of these products are purchased—and eventually need to be disposed of—by their agencies. Furthermore, many do not realize that the life cycle of electronics—from manufacture to disposal—can have considerable impact on the environment. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that many electronics have short life spans due to rapid changes in technology.

EPA initiated the READ services program to try to address some of these issues. To make the program accessible to all federal agencies across the country, READ is being administered under a government-wide acquisition contract (GWAC). EPA has issued five-year multiple award contracts to seven small businesses. Under the contracts, the companies will evaluate each piece of equipment and its components, and then will reuse, recycle, or dispose of them using the following hierarchy:



1. Refurbish and resell them, using the proceeds to offset costs.
2. Donate them to charitable causes.
3. Recycle as much as possible.
4. Properly dispose of the remainder.

The READ GWAC is expected to yield the following benefits:

- Provide an effective contract vehicle for addressing the proper disposition of federal electronic equipment in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Ensure appropriate levels of security for sensitive electronic data contained in obsolete equipment.
- Create an audit trail of the equipment's final destination to ensure that reclamation and recycling efforts are reportable.
- Establish a means to realize value and maximize potential revenues from electronic equipment in storage.

What can EPA expect? The program is only in the early stages, but with 2 million federal employees using computers, EPA estimates that there is an average discard/obsolete rate of 10,000 computers per

Recycling a Computer

A typical computer monitor contains six pounds of lead, as well as varying amounts of cadmium, chromium, mercury, and beryllium. When a computer is recycled, normally the hardware is de-manufactured, although some usable parts may be removed for reuse. The de-manufactured material is sorted by commodity type (such as steel, aluminum, copper, plastic) and then either re-used to make new products or disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. This approach helps protect the environment by reducing the amount of material that goes to landfills or incinerators, and it may also minimize the need for raw materials in product manufacturing.

Items Covered by the READ GWAC

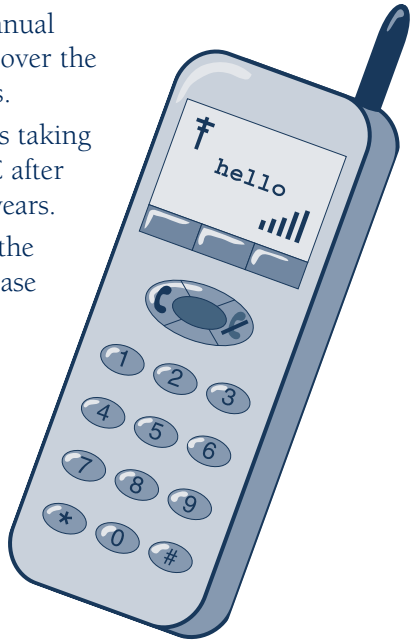
- Desktop PCs
- Computer monitors
- Laptop PCs
- Facsimile machines
- Printers
- Copiers
- Shredders
- Scanners
- Cellular phones
- Televisions
- Miscellaneous peripherals

week. The READ services goal is to recycle half of that number. Initially, the program expects to recycle approximately 3,000 to 4,000 computers per week and increase that number as agencies become familiar with the GWAC.

Over the next five years, EPA is aiming for the following benchmarks:

- A 10 percent annual increase in the ratio of recycled and/or reused items as compared to total volume of electronic items received.
- A 10 percent average annual increase in cost savings over the first three contract years.
- 30 agencies/departments taking advantage of the GWAC after the first three contract years.

For more information on the READ services program, please contact Oliver Voss at <voss.oliver@epa.gov> or visit <www.epa.gov/oamhpod1/readinfo/index.htm>.



Did You Know?

- The federal government is one of the largest consumers of electronic products, purchasing 7 percent of the world's computers.
- The government disposes of approximately 10,000 computers each week, many of which end up in storage closets, warehouses, and landfills, or overseas, where environmental standards may be lower.
- If electronics are mishandled, toxic chemicals such as lead, mercury, chromium, cadmium, and beryllium can be released into the environment.
- Recycling electronics helps reduce the pollution generated and energy used while manufacturing a new product and prevents the need to extract virgin materials.

Examples of Mercury-Containing Equipment:

- Flow meters
- Thermostats
- Barometers
- Temperature gauges
- Manometers
- Pressure gauges
- Mercury car switches
- Gas safety relays
- Water temperature gauges
- Mercury regulators
- Sprinkler system contacts

New Rule to Make Mercury Disposal Easier

In August 2005, EPA officially designated mercury-containing equipment as universal waste in hopes of facilitating easier disposal and recycling of mercury. Streamlined management requirements are expected to provide flexibility and allow more mercury to be diverted away from municipal landfills and incinerators. The new universal waste rule is estimated to affect 1,877 small and large quantity generators, such as medical facilities and salvage yards, that handle up to 550 tons of mercury-containing equipment.

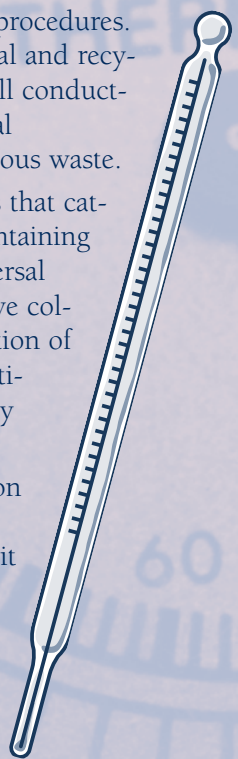
A wide variety of items found in cars, homes, industrial tools, and electric utilities are considered mercury-containing equipment (see sidebar). If not properly disposed of, any device or part of a device that contains elemental mercury is potentially hazardous.

The intention of redefining mercury-containing equipment as universal waste under the RCRA hazardous waste program is to encourage more comprehensive collection and recycling of mercury waste from these products. Previously, mercury-containing equipment was subject to stringent recordkeeping, storage, and transportation requirements. Due to the strict procedures, households or small businesses simply throw these items in the garbage where they are lost among municipal trash. Ultimately, the toxic materials are either released in landfills or emitted into the air during incineration.

Universal waste guidelines, already in place for other products such as batteries and lamps, are designed to encourage local governments, communities, and retailers to participate in responsible disposal of these items. Universal waste rules are specifically tailored to individual types of waste. The new regulations for mercury-containing equipment allow for greater flexibility in collection, storage, transportation, and general management procedures. However, final disposal and recycling of mercury is still conducted according to federal regulations for hazardous waste.

EPA's analysis shows that categorizing mercury-containing waste under the universal waste rule will improve collection and consolidation of mercury waste and ultimately reduce mercury emissions.

For more information on EPA's universal waste rules, please visit <www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/id/univwast/wasts.htm>.



Composting Food *and* Forks

Employees eating lunch in the Whitten Cafeteria at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. recently found themselves throwing their leftover food, along with plates, bowls, knives, and napkins, into compost bins. It was all part of USDA's first official pilot test for biobased products and continuing efforts to implement purchasing provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill (Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002).

The two-month long program was launched at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 12, 2005, hosted by USDA Deputy Secretary Chuck Conner and Assistant Secretary for Administration Michael James Harrison. The overall goal of the pilot was to assess the practicality of biobased cafeteriaware and support the developing biobased product industry.

Under the pilot program, employees were directed to dispose of all biobased products (see box at right) into designated compost containers, which were taken to the USDA composting facility in Beltsville, Maryland. The composted materials were then used as fertilizer at the USDA plant testing facilities, saving costs for soil enrichment. USDA will be assessing the life-cycle costs as part of the final evaluation of the program.

Even the small-scale pilot project has had a pronounced effect on production demand for biobased suppliers and market development for biobased products. USDA noted that a critical part of the program's success was advanced planning and securing suppliers for the biobased food service products.

The program was originally scheduled for one month, but was extended to two months to more strongly support the effort to integrate biobased products into mainstream use. Many people took notice of the unique benefits of biobased products, and feedback was positive, according to USDA officials responsible for the pilot. "I think it's done a great job raising awareness," said Juliette McCarthy of the USDA Office of the Secretary.

Others outside USDA also took notice. EPA has expressed interest in developing a similar program, as have other agencies. Large-scale partnerships among government agencies have the potential to make significant impacts on biobased product purchasing. For more information please contact Juliet McCarthy at <juliet.mccarthy@usda.gov>.

The following products were all composted at the Whitten Cafeteria during the pilot program:

- Plates
- Cups
- Bowls
- Knives
- Forks
- Spoons
- Napkins
- Trash Bags

Pollution Prevention and Toxics
(7409M)

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www.epa.gov/epp
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